

INTUITIVE EATING FOR A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

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What is Intuitive Eating?

Intuitive eating is a way of eating using our hunger and fullness cues that signals the body to know when and how much to eat. Eating while using our minds to think about our body signals helps us connect eating food to how the food can nourish our bodies. The connection that can be made with food through Intuitive eating strengthens eating habits and boosts complete health. This is not a diet; it is a lifestyle that supports eating and enjoying food rather than focusing on weight control. Intuitive Eating is a health approach concept created by two Registered Dietitians, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, in 1995.

10 Parts of Intuitive Eating

Learning to eat intuitively is a process that takes time. The diet mindset has to be thrown away to allow your mind and body to connect. A dieting mindset is one that has strict rules around food and focuses on body change. Fad diets are not a part of intuitive eating. Feeling hungry is your body telling you it is time to eat; it helps you notice that feeling. Foods are often labeled as “good” or “bad,” but food should not have moral value. All foods should be allowed, and it is good to challenge the thoughts that label foods this way. Eat foods that are nutritious and bring you good health and eat foods that you enjoy and that bring pleasure. When you are eating, notice when you start to feel full and assess whether you are satisfied enough to stop eating. Emotional eating can bring short-term comfort but finding other ways to resolve those feelings can help strengthen your relationship with food. When building your relationship with food, accept the body you have so you can nourish it properly. Avoid judging your body with harmful thoughts. Engage in exercise that feels good to your body. Don’t view exercise as a way to lose weight but instead to move your body. Know what foods nourish the body well and be gentle with yourself with eating. Being healthy does not mean being perfect at eating the right foods. All foods can fit into a healthy lifestyle when our focus shifts from adjusting our appearance to strengthening our health.



All foods can fit into a healthy lifestyle when our focus shifts from adjusting our appearance to strengthening our health. Kristen Carney, 2020 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Diets

Diets that target weight loss are hard to manage and lead to decreased mental and physical health. When weight and body shape change is the center of an eating style, decreased body acceptance, body image, and lowered self-worth can increase. Research finds that being aware of mental health is a basic need in reaching overall sustained health.

Building a Healthy Relationship with Food

Having a healthy relationship with food means living by the idea that eating is social, emotional, and physical. Being flexible with food means eating to fill your hunger and enjoying different foods when they are a part of making good memories, regardless of what the food is. Letting yourself accept all foods helps in finding a way to nourish your body and to enjoy food at the same time.

Learn to accept your body: Focus on health over appearance and notice the things that your body gives you the ability to do.

Stop comparing yourself to others: Every person has diverse health needs, and health does not look the same for everyone.

Impact during Childhood

Childhood is when thoughts and actions related to eating come about due to the many factors that impact them during this growing phase of life.

During puberty, youth face a lot of body changes and are more self-aware. The impact from family, peers, and social life mold the thoughts and feelings of childhood. Messages about weight and looks that arise during youth impact eating behaviors leading to starting diets at a young age. Diets often lead to low body image and involvement in unhealthy social pressures around eating. Common social pressures on youth stem from a perceived need to be liked, sending false messages around weight and health.



The impact of Intuitive Eating to youth may inspire healthy eating habits and build self-worth so that they can have a good base for their relationship with food. Teaching youth to focus on their relationship with food and feelings can combat the poor health messages that are commonly noticed in adolescence.

Model a Healthy Relationship with Food and Self for Youth

- Teach that self-worth is not based on looks.
- Teach appreciation for how the body functions.
- Avoid constant talk about diets.
- Inspire eating many types of foods.
- Don't use food as a reward or punishment.
- Avoid labeling food such as "good" or "bad".
- Avoid making comments about others' bodies.
- Know and discuss the dangers of changing body shape through diets.
- Trust your child's hunger and fullness.
- Never try to limit their food intake unless under medical supervision.

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